

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND  
REFORMER ill

that of the Rougon-Macquarts, which finally expanded into a series of twenty volumes.

At a later date, on August 27, 1870, while lunching with Edmond de Goncourt,<sup>1</sup>— Jules had died in the previous

June — Zola reverted to this subject and expressed his conviction that, after all which had been accomplished by others, such as by Flaubert in "Madame Bovary," after all the analysis of petty shades of feeling, all the minute jewelry work, so to say, which had been done in literature, there was no longer any call for the younger men to imagine and build up any one or two characters; they could only appeal to the public by the power and the breadth of their creations,—

briefly, they must work on a large scale. And Zola allowed it to be inferred that it was this view which had prompted his scheme of a family history.

But he had not been influenced solely by that consideration. The original germ of his idea lay far back, in that projected poetic trilogy, "Genese," which was to have recounted the advent, development, and destiny of mankind. That vague scheme, suggested by the pages of Lucretius, had been resuscitated, transformed, modernised, so to say, by the repeated perusal of Balzac's "Comédie Humaine"; and there is little doubt that, from the practical standpoint of personal

advantage, Zola was also influenced by the success of many connected series of books. It is a question whether Balzac's novels were widely read at that moment. Cheap, badly printed on the vilest paper, they were to be seen in almost every bookseller's shop, but their covers, soiled and fading, often spoke of long continuance in the dealers' custody; whereas there could be no doubt of the ready sale, the im-

<sup>1</sup> "Journal des Goncourt," Vol. IV, p. 15.